

Message Text

SECRET POSS DUPE

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ACTION EA-14

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JCS WASHDC

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COMUSSAG NKP

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

S E C R E T PHNOM PENH 5020

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS CB

SUBJECT: KHMER AIR FORCE OPERATIONS AT KAMPOT

1. DURING MY FIRST WEEK HERE THE GKR HAS BEEN FACED WITH A HIGHLY CRITICAL MILITARY SITUATION AT KAMPOT. UNTIL YESTERDAY IT APPEARED THAT THIS IMPORTANT CITY ON THE GULF OF SIAM WAS SURELY SLIPPING INTO THE ENEMY'S GRASP. SUCH A DEFEAT FOLLOWING THE LOSS OF THE FORMER ROYAL CAPITAL OF OUDONG WOULD NOT ONLY COST DEARLY IN EQUIPMENT AND MEN BUT WOULD HAVE BEEN IMPORTANT PSYCHOLOGICAL AND OTHER CONSEQUENCES FOR FANK AND THE NATION AS A WHOLE. THE KHMER AIR FORCE MOUNTED A BIG AIR EFFORT YESTERDAY AND MAY WELL HAVE SAVED KAMPOT.

2. IN 24 HOURS, THE KAF MOUNTED OVER 100 TACTICAL AIR SORTIES OVER HALF OF WHICH WERE CONCENTRATED IN SUPPORT OF KAMPOT'S DEFENDERS. AT KAMPOT 24 STRIKES WERE MADE BY 5-28 FIGHTER BOMBERS, 7 SORTIES FLOWN BY AU24 GUNSHIPS, 6 SORTIES BY HELICOPTER GUNSHIPS,

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3 DAY AND 3 NIGHT SORTIES BY AC-47 GUNSHIPS, AND 5 SORTIES BY O1D FORWARD AIR CONTROLLERS. THIS WAS

AN ALL AIR FORCE EFFORT INVOLVING LEADERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, TACAIR AND AIR TRANSPORT. THIS LEVEL OF EFFORT NUMERICALLY COMPARES WITH OTHER BIG EFFORTS BUT HERE WE SAW COORDINATED OPERATIONS FROM AN ADVANCED BASE (REAM), AS WELL AS POCHENTONG, CONDUCTED DURING SOME UNFAVORABLE WEATHER CONDITIONS. I AM CONVINCED THAT THIS SIGNIFICANT EFFORT, MOUNTED AT THIS PARTICULAR MOMENT, PLAYED A VERY LARGE PART IN THE SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE OF THIS IMPORTANT PROVINCE CAPITAL.

3. ALTHOUGH WE HAVE NO CLEAR REPORTS OF ENEMY CASUALTIES IT IS EVIDENT THAT THE ENEMY HAS BEEN HURT BY THESE AIR STRIKES AS THE GROUND FORCES WERE ABLE TO REESTABLISH THE NORTHERN DEFENSIVE PERIMETER ABOUT 500 METERS NORTH OF THE CITY LIMITS. IN ADDITION TO THE TACTICAL AIR EFFORT, KAF MUSTERED ITS MEAGER AIR TRANSPORT RESOURCES AND DURING THE PAST TWO DAYS SUCCESSFULLY LIFTED TWO PLUS BATTALIONS FROM PHNOM PENH TO REAM AIR BASE. SOME OF THESE REINFORCEMENTS WERE THEN LIFTED INTO KAMPOT BY KAF HELICOPTER WHILE THE REMAINDER WERE TRANSPORTED BY THE KHMER NAVY UNDER KAF AIR COVER. IN THE WANING HOURS OF THE DAY KAF WAS CALLED UPON TO MAKE TWO EMERGENCY AIRDROPS OF DESPERATELY NEEDED MORTAR AMMUNITION. THE LAST DROP

WAS COMPLETED AFTER NIGHTFALL.

4. I CONSIDER THIS SUPERB RESPONSE BY THE KAF TO A CRITICAL SITUATION ESPECIALLY SIGNIFICANT WHEN IT IS REALIZED THAT THIS SERVICE HAS ONLY BEEN CALLED UPON TO PERFORM THE TRUE FUNCTIONS OF AN AIR FORCE SINCE THE CESSATION OF U.S. AIR SUPPORT ON 15 AUGUST LAST YEAR. IN EFFECT WE HAVE IN KAF AN EIGHT-MONTH OLD AIR FORCE. ALTHOUGH THERE HAVE BEEN UPS AND DOWNS CAUSED BY EVENTS OVER WHICH IT HAS LITTLE CONTROL, KAF'S OVERALL PERFORMANCE SINCE AUGUST 15 HAS SHOWN STEADY IMPROVEMENT. THE KAF HAS PROVEN, ON SEVERAL PRIOR OCCASIONS ITS CAPABILITY TO MOUNT HIGHLY EFFECTIVE OPERATIONS AND TO SUSTAIN HIGH SORTIE

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RATES ON A SURGE BASIS FOR BRIEF PERIODS OF TIME OPERATING FROM ITS MAIN BASE AT POCHENTONG. NOW AT KAMPOT IT HAS DEMONSTRATED THE CAPABILITY TO LAUNCH A COORDINATED EFFORT IN THE PROVINCES FROM TWO DIFFERENT STAGING AREAS.

5. THE CONSIDERABLE EARLIER EFFORT OF OUR PEOPLE HERE TOWARD THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE KAF PERFORMANCE IS PAYING DIVIDENDS AND THE FAVORABLE IMPACT OF THE MAXIMUM EFFORT BEING PUT FORTH UNDER THE TACTICAL

AIR IMPROVEMENT PLAN CAMBODIA IS NOW BEGINNING TO BE
REALIZED. ALL INDICATIONS LEAD ME TO CONCLUDE THAT
CONTINUED IMPROVEMENT CAN BE ANTICIPATED.
DEAN

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